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A FEW WORDS IN DEFENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

I

A MEASURE will be submitted to you on an early day for settling the question of University Education in Ireland. It will have for its object the advancement of learning in that portion of my dominions, and will be framed with a careful regard to the rights of conscience. So ran the most promising, or at least the most imposing, paragraph in the Queen's Speech, at the opening of the Parliamentary session of 1873. It was the fifth session of the great Liberal supremacy under Mr. Gladstone's first régime as Prime Minister. The year 1869 had witnessed the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The Irish Land Act of 1870 had initiated, for better and for worse, the abolition of the Irish landlords. After some three sessions devoted to the celebrated Education Act (1870), the Cardwell Army Scheme, and the Ballot Act, Mr. Gladstone returned, in 1873, to the case of Ireland, with a view to remove "the third branch of the upas tree of poisonous ascendancy," such as he had described it in his speeches during the General Election of 1868. The Establishment was gone, the Landlords were going: what remained but to make an end of the University of Dublin? On Thursday, February 13, the Prime Minister himself introduced the Irish University Bill in a speech of three hours' duration. The speech was one of his oratorical triumphs for lucid exposition and mastery of detail. The Bill was at first received with apparent approval at least in the Liberal ranks, and the Premier was in high spirits at his achievement; it

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was actually believed in some quarters that there would be no division on the second reading. The chief provisions of Mr. Gladstone's Bill, stated summarily, were as follows: (1) The abolition of the existing Queen's University, and of the Queen's College in Galway. (2) The divorce of Trinity College from the University of Dublin, or, in other words, the destruction of the existing University of Dublin. (3) The erection of a new University of Dublin, comprising as constituent members Trinity College, the Queen's Colleges in Belfast and Cork, a Roman Catholic foundation (*i.e.* the so-called Roman Catholic University), and possibly other educational institutions. (4) The transfer of the Theological Faculty of Trinity College from the College to the recently disestablished Church. (5) The creation of a governing body for the new University of Dublin, to be nominated in the first instance by the Crown. (6) The provision of funds for the endowment of the new University by contributions from Trinity, from the Church surplus, and from the Consolidated Fund. But, when the House of Commons recovered from the "mesmeric trance" which the Prime Minister's oratory had cast over it, objections and difficulties of divers origin rapidly multiplied. After a great debate the division on the second reading was taken in the early hours of March 12, and the strongest Liberal Government of modern times found itself in a minority; the numbers were Ayes 284, Noes 287, majority against the Bill, 3. Mr. Gladstone in consequence resigned. He had been defeated by the secession of his own Radical followers, who, to their entire credit, could not digest the invasion and compromise of academic liberty, involved in the prospective government of the new University, and the restrictions to be placed on teachers and on subjects, in the interest of Roman Catholic principles. A governmental crisis ensued, only terminated by the resumption of office on the part of the Liberal

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Ministry; but its restoration brought neither ease nor dignity, and not even Mr. Gladstone's historic offer to abolish the income tax availed to avert his dismissal twelve months later at the inevitable General Election. Many causes and considerations contributed to the popular verdict of 1874; but the one most conspicuous fiasco of the first Gladstonian Cabinet was undoubtedly their essay in Irish University Reform. Yet their plan then all but exactly anticipated, or suggested, the plan apparently contemplated in the first instance by the present Liberal Cabinet, and outlined by Mr. Bryce in his speech of January 25, last, a political harangue strangely delivered on the eve of his departure for Washington, to assume the representative but neutral functions of His Majesty's Ambassador to the Government of the United States. What was the purpose of this Parthian arrow? What the moral of this parting utterance? Was it a message of peace and good-will? Was it an apple of discord, flung to the contending factions in Ireland? Or, was it a *ballon d'essai*, to draw the enemy's fire, to test the force of the wind, or, it may be, to make an alternative solution more acceptable? Though Mr. Bryce's plan almost anticipated the report of the last Commission on the subject, or of a bare moiety of the Commissioners, yet it is difficult to believe that the Liberal Cabinet of 1907 can expect a plan to succeed in their hands which wrecked the Liberal Government of 1868; or to persuade the best elements in their own party to destroy—and that in the name of learning and higher education—the one bulwark in Ireland, not of Protestant ascendency—that has gone long ago—but of academic liberty. But, again, it is difficult to suppose that the Lord Chief Baron Palles, and Sir Thomas Raleigh, Dr. Hyde, and Mr. Coffey, and even Professor Henry Jackson in less decided terms, should agree in recommending for Ireland a scheme of university reorganization, without there being

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some risk, notwithstanding the dissent of their colleagues, Sir Edward Fry, Sir Arthur Rücker, and Mr. Butcher, lest a serious attempt be made to enforce this resurrected scheme by legislation. Thorough discussion (but only that) is assuredly necessary to avert the great peril which threatens academic liberties, primarily in Ireland, and in the next instance elsewhere—who can tell? If one academic stronghold of free study, free learning and free teaching, free thought and the free expression of thought, is to be surrendered and demolished to please the Roman Catholics, who will guarantee the permanent independence of all the others?

II

There are at this moment two universities in Ireland, free and open to all comers; why is there, then, a burning university question? Simply because the Roman Catholics of Ireland, that is, nearly three-fourths of the population, or at least the Hierarchy which controls the Roman Catholic majority, are discontented with the constitution and character of those two universities, and, it must be allowed, naturally discontented in the one case, and rightly discontented in the other. The University of Dublin, a teaching and examining body, *de facto* if not *de jure* identical with Trinity College, has existed for upwards of three hundred years as a university of the first order, and though comprising but one college, has proved itself not unworthy in every point of view to be classed with the still more ancient universities of England and of Scotland. In the eighteenth century Trinity College offered its university degrees to Roman Catholics and Non-episcopalians Protestants, long before a similar measure was taken with the English universities; and since 1874

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its emoluments have been open without confessional test or restriction to all comers. Trinity College has even volunteered more recently to allow a Roman Catholic chapel to be built within its walls, and proper arrangements to be made for the supervision and training of Roman Catholics by directors of their own within its borders. But the Irish Hierarchy will have nothing to do with it. Apart from the natural dread of the custom and tradition of three centuries, the Roman Catholic bishops repudiate and disallow "mixed education" for the members of their communion. No reform of Trinity College, short of its destruction, could satisfy such intransigence. It is thought, however, in some quarters, that if the University of Dublin could be disintegrated and detached from Trinity College, something might be made of it acceptable to the Catholics. Undoubtedly the University of Dublin might be made acceptable to the Catholics, but only on condition of making it unacceptable, not merely to Trinity College, but to every other institution, and profession, which has accepted the free and unfettered pursuit of knowledge, the liberty to teach and to publish the results of such research, independently of episcopal sanction and of confessional authority, as the supreme right and duty of a modern university. The Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland will never accept a teaching university emancipate from ecclesiastical authority ; and a university, directly or indirectly, under Roman Catholic or any other confessional authority and restriction, will be no university as Trinity College, and as every modern university understands the term and itself. For this reason the existing University of Dublin, and any University of Dublin, which could be acceptable to Trinity College, or true to the great traditions and evolution of the past, can be no solution of the difficulty created by the essentially illiberal ideals of the Roman Catholic Church in

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Ireland. For any practicable solution of that problem we must look elsewhere. The second existing university in Ireland is the Royal University, located in Dublin. The Royal University was founded in 1879 upon the ruins of the Queen's University, which, like the Queen's Colleges in Cork and Galway, had been thwarted and atrophied by the persistent hostility of the Roman Hierarchy. The Royal University is merely an examining authority, and as such examines and incorporates some three-fourths of the university students in Ireland, who obtain their instruction from the Queen's Colleges, or from various Catholic and other institutions and seminaries, or even from purely private tutors. In the government of the Royal University Catholic and Protestant claims are nicely balanced, though its endowments, in the shape of fellowships, are apparently for the most part in Catholic hands. Probably the line of least resistance for university legislation would be the development, as recommended by the minority of three Commissioners above named, of the Royal University into a teaching university, with an adequate endowment from public sources, and a frank organization of its governing body upon lines acceptable to the Catholic authority. It is reported that the English Nonconformist conscience, so largely represented in the present House of Commons, will not abide the endowment of a university which is to be placed frankly under Roman Catholic auspices. This is the conscience which refuses rates, but pays taxes, for denominational education. This is the conscience which, directly, endows Maynooth College, a Roman Catholic seminary for the priesthood, and indirectly endows a college in Dublin, conducted by Jesuits; but still its scruples can be respected. The adequate endowment of University College, or the foundation of a Roman Catholic college in Dublin, the elevation of the Royal University into a

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teaching university, and the incorporation of the Roman Catholic college, or colleges, with the said University, can all be accomplished without the introduction of any direct test of a religious character, and simply by the “proper” constitution of the governing body. No such tests are, at present, in operation for the salaried fellows of the Royal University, the majority of whom are Catholics; no such tests are applied to the staff of the Jesuit University College in Stephen’s Green, one member at least of which is, I understand, a Protestant. The given problem is to create and to endow a university, a teaching, examining, degree-conferring and, at least within limits, researching corporation, which shall conform to Roman Catholic requirements in Ireland. The most truly genuine nucleus of such an institution did and does exist in the so-called Catholic University of Ireland, founded by the Irish Roman Catholic bishops in 1854, but without any State recognition, or endowment. Whatever functions of a quasi-university kind it discharged have been largely absorbed and eclipsed by the Royal University. Better a hundredfold to recognize, endow, and constitute this Catholic University, better a thousandfold to develop, endow, and virtually to romanize the Royal University, than to destroy the existing University of Dublin, in the vain hope of remoulding it so as to reconcile Roman Catholic authority, in its ultramontane mood, with that modern and developed spirit, to which the Reformation and the Revolution now appear but as subordinate phases of its own emancipation.

III

The scheme for the reconstitution of the University of Dublin, as outlined in Mr. Bryce’s valedictory oration, involves at least two retrograde measures, independently of its chimerical fusion of ultramontane authority with

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academic liberty. (1) It destroys two universities in Ireland, to make way for a single university; (2) the monopolist university to be thus installed in the solitude so created is to be a federation of colleges, existing or to be called into existence. Scotland, with a homogeneous population numerically inferior to the people of Ireland, has its four universities, of substantially similar type. England and Wales, with thirty millions of inhabitants, have nine or ten universities in being, and others in prospect. The tendency to multiply and to localize the centres of the highest academic teaching has been one of the most marked and well-justified movements of our generation; but in Ireland the sacred streams are to reverse their flow, and all to return into a single channel. This arbitrary reversion runs counter to organic instincts and natural development. France had, under Napoleonic auspices, a single university; over-centralization impoverished learning and stereotyped academic methods; France has renounced the error. It would have been possible to have forced all the local centres of higher academic teaching in England and Wales into a single and federal university; the living tendency has pushed matters in the other direction, and independent universities have multiplied before our eyes. The signs of life and natural movement point in the same direction for Ireland. There are actually two, if not three, universities already in Dublin, discharging distinct functions, answering real needs, and capable of expansion and improvement. There is a centre of academic work in Belfast obviously capable of being developed into a University, worthy to rank with most of the recent foundations in England. There is a centre of Academic and medical work in Cork, which demands recognition of its university capacity. Why are these vigorous and independent local centres of light and leading to be stunted

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and resolved into a single federation? Is it on purely financial grounds? Or, is it with some crude notion of persuading North and South and East and West to live in peace and unity—an academic experiment with a political end in view? Or, is it in the chimerical hope that the tradition and renown of the existing University of Dublin can be exploited and diffused over a number of alien constituents, by the simple transference of the name? If the substitution of Unity for Plurality in this matter of university organization is a retrograde step, still more anomalous is the recurrence to federation. For a successful federation, whether of states or of colleges, among many requisite conditions two are pre-eminently necessary; in the first place, local continuity, or contiguity, and in the second place, a homogeneous character and community of sentiment and interest among all the several members of the federation. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are not mere federal unions of colleges; the University in each case has an independent *persona* of its own; but Oxford and Cambridge exhibit in many respects the working of successful federations. The more strictly technical federation of Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds, after providing a useful stage of education, and transition, has broken up into three independent universities. Yet in this case the federated units were locally within easy hail of each other, were structurally of similar character, were of approximately similar age, of cognate origin and purpose. In the case of the proposed Irish federation, all the elements of success are wanting, and the federation is foredoomed to failure. The members are to be coerced legislatively into a federation, imposed *ab extra*. The federated units are scattered over Ireland, amid different surroundings, and with various local needs. It is a far cry from Belfast to Cork; Dublin is nearer to Liverpool than to Galway.

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Worst of all, the two closest neighbours in this ill-starred union would be the most mutually repugnant to each other, Trinity College and the Roman Catholie college in Dublin. It is doubtful whether the Catholic college would voluntarily enter sueh a federation ; it is certain that Trinity can only be forced into it, under protest, and with an inextinguishable sense of tyranny and wrong : what an auspicious inauguration for the new adventure ! But, if Trinity College has its enemies, if the fair ideal of academic freedom embodied in the University of Dublin, as in our universities within the four seas, is an offence to the Irish majority, then indecd those enemies and that majority might well clap their hands for joy of this ingenuous federation ; for the federation must spell ruin to Trinity College as to the University of Dublin. Trinity College might easily federate itsclf with any number of eolleges, animated by the same ideals and pursuing the same ends, of free research, free teaching, free publication, such as inform it to-day : but, a degraded member of a federal university, accommodated to the requirements of an ultramontanc hierarchy, Trinity College will be unrecognizable, a shadow, a memory of its former self: *fuit Ilion !* Trinity, but living Trinity no more !

IV

The protest against the dissolution of the existing University of Dublin is no plea for the actual *status quo* in Trinity College, or in the University itself. Trinity College requires reform in several not insignificant directions. The “Board,” that is, the seven senior fellows, have too much power, and the professors and junior fellows too little. The distribution of income and emoluments might be re-adjusted so as to offer ability and service a surer carcer. The purely examinational test for fellowships should be

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qualified. More might, perhaps, be done directly to encourage research, and graduate study, than is done at present. The general curriculum requires reconsideration, and the regular examinations might probably be curtailed with advantage. Degrees should in no case be obtainable by passing examinations alone, without fulfilling conditions of residence. I know not whether any good, economic or social, were to be expected from the institution of a class of students corresponding to the non-collegiate bodies at Oxford and Cambridge, which have done so much to bring the advantages of university teaching within reach of poor men ; possibly the existing system in Trinity College, which allows so large a proportion of extra-mural students, may provide all that is needed in that direction. The constitution and government of the University of Dublin make the recognition of women, as undergraduates and as graduates, an easier question than it can be in Oxford and Cambridge ; and the University of Dublin might possibly incorporate one or more colleges for women, without compromising its own constitution or discipline. On most of the points just enumerated the recent Commission has made suggestions of weight. But there is one head on which reform in the University of Dublin, and in Trinity College, can hardly be carried any further, or more be expected than the University and College have done, or have announced their willingness to do ; and that is, the admission of Roman Catholics to all degrees, emoluments, and advantages, direct and indirect, in the College and the University. The Commission had nothing to suggest on this head but that the truly liberal and magnanimous offers of the College should be held open in perpetuity. And this recommendation might seem to entail a standing reproach to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, for the Commission has deliberately found, *that it is impossible to recommend any such changes in the constitution*

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of Trinity College as would render it acceptable to the Roman Catholic Episcopate. The Commission might have found, with equal reason, that the changes in the constitution of the University of Dublin, which would render it acceptable to the Roman Catholic Episcopate, must destroy its character and reputation as a home of free and unfettered learning, and must react detrimentally upon the position and prospects of Trinity College. To reduce Ireland to a single university, and that a university "acceptable to the Roman Catholic Episcopate," is to rob Ireland, and the whole world, of a stronghold of learning and of liberty. If a Catholic university, embracing St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, already largely endowed by the State, and the Catholic University College, already to some extent indirectly endowed by the State, together with the Catholic School of Medicine, and other institutions under similar *de facto* confessional restrictions, is yet too much to ask of the denominational undenominationalists of this country, let them concede the establishment of an adequately endowed Catholic college within the Royal University—a concession which the Catholics are pledged to accept as satisfactory; and let the Catholic college, or the Catholic university earn, in process of time, its own laurels and its own renown, in the pursuit of "Catholic truth." But let Trinity College be spared to represent in Ireland the pursuit of truth, and the maintenance of university education, unfettered by ecclesiastical restrictions, and uncontaminated by sectarian animosities. Let us leave it, as at present, a free college in a free university, and avoid driving it back upon the worst traditions of bigotry or exclusiveness in its own past, by reducing it to the condition of a mere Protestant outpost in a University of Dublin reformed out of all recognition, for the ultramontane intransigeant's approval.

REGINALD W. MACAN